A CIRCULAR.

BY ONE WHO WISHES TO LEARN.

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THE following "CIRCULAR" was published in a series of articles on our first page, for several weeks in succession; and were prepared by one who wishes to learn. They may have excited the surprise of some and the curiosity of others. They may appear to a few of our readers to embody the temper and utterances of a sceptical mind. But that is far from the real state of the case. The writer is an honest inquirer. The difficulties presented and described have been felt to a painful degree by the author of those articles. Nor does he stand alone in the perplexing experience which he portrays. We frequently meet with the like, and have been greatly puzzled in our efforts to counsel and guide such inquirers. It is true, and will be easily seen by not a few of our readers, that the "*sick man*" presents his troubles with more skill and force than the "*minister*" presents his replies. Some of the "*sick man's*" objections and difficulties are utterly destitute of a foundation in truth, and the "*minister*" should have summarily demolished them, instead of trying to argue against them.

We hope some one, who is competent for the task, will take up the "*sick man's*" troubles, sift out those that are groundless, and reply to those that are real. The task is worthy of an effort, and if properly dealt with, will do an immense amount of good. Many of the objections may be put to silence, if the objector cannot be aided in overcoming his difficulties. But in *such a case*, divine grace and power must do a work which no human argument or appeal can accomplish.

A CIRCULAR.

Notwithstanding the numerous religious books now in circulation, designed, and, in many respects, well calculated to lead a large proportion of their readers to Christ, there is a certain class of inquirers (I vote myself their representative) who are not reached by any of those books, inasmuch as they treat the whole unconverted portion of mankind as *unwilling* to become Christians, being so much under the influence "of the world, the flesh, and the devil;" whereas, in fact, there is a considerable per centage of inquirers who are MORE THAN WILLING, but "know not the way." The authors of the treatises referred to, making this their stand-point, very naturally are *persuasive* only, and thereby ignore the class to which I allude, who, having been made to desire the "pearl of great price," earnestly ask what act (if any) must we perform, what desires (if any) must we cultivate, and what thoughts (if any) must we entertain, in order to find the "pearl of great price?"

On what I consider valid ground, I think that real good may be accomplished by a ventilation of the spiritual difficulties of the class to which I allude; for which purpose I most affectionately solicit the prayers and kind aid of the Christian friends of experience to whom I address this circular. While sympathy is readily enlisted and unsparingly lavished on the *deeply convicted*, it is most difficult to excite it, and there is very little for, and that very little most reluctantly granted, to the class in question. I shall, however, endeavor to enlist it at the very outset *by solemnly declaring, in the presence of a heart-searching God, that I will present no difficulties but such as I have had, do now have, or have known others to feel to be really gigantic ones*, and positively needing the aid and sympathy for which we plead. Feeling it to be of so much importance that this statement should be deeply impressed on the minds of those to whom this circular is addressed, I beg to be allowed to repeat it: *I solemnly declare, in the presence of a heart-searching God, that I will present no difficulties but such as I have had, do now have, or have known others to feel to be really gigantic ones.* And in presenting them, I propose to do so in the simplest and plainest manner possible, entirely regardless of the criticisms of any class into whose hands it may happen to fall, and humbly averring that my only motive is to do good, and that with as "single eye" as I ever expect to be able to command while connected with this "body of sin."

In proof of what I say in reference to many inquirers being treated as *unwilling* to become Christians, I will quote a few passages from some eminent preachers and authors, such as the following. (Most of the words in italics are so printed to bring out the point we are aiming to reach):—

"Will you say that it was a work above your power? You know that you cannot thus excuse your sin; for if you had been but truly WILLING you might have done it. The obstacle lay in your obstinate UNWILLINGNESS. Are you WILLING this day, unfeignedly WILLING, to turn to God? If you are, you will return without delay."—*Rev. Richard Baxter.*

"Neither heathens nor devils ever aggravated their sins by ARTFUL refusing of such an appropriate offer and only remedy."—*Rev. John Flavel.*

"If not saved, the blame will be on your own head. You WILL NOT believe! You WILL NOT come to Christ that He may give you life."—*Rev. J. C. Ryle, A. M.*

"There is nothing wanting to secure their salvation but a hearty consent of their WILLS to the terms of the gospel. All the complaints of Christ are on account of men's UNWILLINGNESS."—*Flavel's Christ Knocking at the Door.*

"'Whosoever will let him come.' What wouldst thou have more? The invitation cannot be plainer. If then thou art not saved, it is plain thou hast no WILL for salvation; for if thou hast a WILL thou hast a warrant."—*Usher.*

"I beseech you, excuse me if I am in earnest with you to ENTREAT you. * * * Friends, I BESEECH you regard me now as you would do if I should come from the dead to you. * * * Well then I beseech you make enquiry into your hearts. And WILL you refuse to part with poison because it is sweet? Have you no sense of shame, and no desire for im-

mortality? Come then, O my friends! have you all made up your minds to arise and go to your Father? Why linger here? Why persist? Why not go home at once? Which will you resist after all? * * * Oh be reconciled to God *this very day!* Why would you turn by-and-by? Because Christ beseeches you? And does not he as much beseech you now? Why would you turn by-and-by? Does not God now command you? And are you not disobeying and defying Him by delaying."—*Rev. H. G. Guinness.*

"Nothing doth or can hinder you but thine own WILFUL NEGLECT and refusal. * * * If after all this the wicked will not turn, their own WILFULNESS is the cause of their own damnation, they therefore die, because they WILL DIE. * * * We cannot make you believe against your will. * * * Your destruction is owing to yourselves in that you resist. * * * If I could but get you to be WILLING."—*Alleine's Admonition.*

"And yet is so in love with his bondage, that he WILL neither accept Christ or the redemption he brings. * * * Christ has prepared the only remedy that can heal his wounds, and he WILL NOT suffer him to apply it."—*Rev. John Flavel.*

"What say you? WILL you return to God or WILL you not? I pray you let your hearts make answers, yes or no. WILL you return and be converted or WILL you not? What say you? Are you resolved to turn or are you not? Do not put me off with to-morrow or some other time hereafter, as if it were not time yet, or you could not spare your sins yet. If you refuse this offer which God makes you now, are you sure you shall ever have another? God and His ministers persuade you to be converted, but year after year you are still the same, there is something wrong."—*Rev. Richard Baxter.*

"The one question I have to ask this morning is, art thou WILLING? if so Christ bids thee take the water of life. Art thou WILLING? if so be pardoned, be sanctified, be made whole. For if thou art WILLING, Christ is WILLING too. * * *. This text has nothing to do with your heart, it is with your WILL. Are you WILLING? Then be your heart hard as the nether millstone, if thou art WILLING to be saved I am bidden to invite thee, * * * art thou WILLING? Art thou willing to be saved? There is no barrier between thee and Christ except thy stubborn WILL."—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

"If you perish, you will have only YOURSELF TO BLAME. If God is constrained to give you up at last, it will be under protest, calling upon heaven, earth, and hell, to bear witness, that it is YOUR OWN DOING, and not His."—*Sermon by Edwin F. Hatfield, D.D., New York.*

"It places salvation within the reach of the lowest and vilest sinner, if he has but heart and WILL to receive it."—*Rev. J. C. Ryle, A. M.*

We proceed to present our case.

There are those in the business world, who, destitute of means, commence life with a desire to succeed in business, put forth the requisite exertions and acomplish their purpose. There is another class, similarly circumstanced, who make as great, or even greater efforts for the accomplishment of the same object, but yet do not succeed; and then there is a third class, destitute of any such ambition, consequently make no exertion, being quite content to live and die in poverty. Thus, I think, the world might religiously be divided into three classes.

"The whole world is distinguishable into THREE classes of persons, (1), such as are *far from* CHRIST, (2), such as are NOT FAR FROM CHRIST, and (3), such as are IN CHRIST."—*Rev. John Flavel.*

The first class comprise those who, like Zaccheus, sought and readily found "Him of whom Moses did write, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

"Sometimes convinced sinners are enabled by divine grace to indulge the hope of pardon *almost as soon as they feel the conviction of sin.* Yea, some are led to see the evil of sin at first, more by the mercy of the gospel than the stern justice which appears in the law; but others are long and sorely harassed by fears of rejection, before they are brought to a comfortable expectation of forgiveness."—*Rev. J. A. James.*

The second class includes those who cry "oh that I knew where I might find Him," and who "shall strive and not be able," who "seek the Lord if haply they might feel after him and find him;" and, third, those who, Gallio-like, "care for none of these things."

"Alas, such is the desperate evil of our natures and the pernicious depravity of our character, that the message is despised, the invitation of the gospel feast is *rejected.*"—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

"There are few more impressive proofs of human depravity than the general indifference of mankind to the subject of everlasting moment, and the *contempt* of the world for the happy few who are warmly devoted to the Saviour."—*Guide to young Disciples,* (J.G.Pike.)

The second class are those to whom I allude, who *desire* to have, but do *not* obtain. *Wishing*, or *desiring* to have, are found by such to be very different things from *possessing*. Spurgeon says, in one of his sermons, "To be *willing* to accept Christ is a very good thing, but it is a very different thing from conversion. 'If wishes were horses beggars would ride.'"

"It is a good sign when there is an appetite; but a mere appetite does not satisfy a man, he *must eat the food provided*."

"To pray, to hear, to desire, to seek, all this is the road by and the running, but Christ himself be laid hold upon, by faith, *or we are no* . Your seeking Christ will not save except it lead you in every deed to believe in Christ."—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

"I believed the truth of religion, for ought I know, as fully as I do now. But my heart was unmoved. I had some wish to be a Christian, but I had no true idea of faith and repentance, and the theological illustrations which I heard seemed to me to involve the subject in deeper darkness."—*Rev. J. Wayland, D.D.*

The desiring to have an annuity of $5,000 a year, is as different from having one as the desiring to hate sin and to love God, and yet not hating the one and loving the other. If by a mere volition of the will such sentiments of love and hatred could be implanted in our hearts, we would not hesitate a moment in doing so.

We have a *thorough theoretical* knowledge of the way of salvation, with a painful consciousness of our inability to "*call Jesus, Lord*," "*by the Holy Ghost;*" to do so being beyond the power of "*flesh and blood*" to "*reveal.*"

"I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am to believe on any body else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I can not believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind; it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and can not see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-colored arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep *in his nature.* Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit."—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

It appears to us as if God's word contained *two* classes of commands: the one requiring only the *will*, with a determination to act in accordance with it, to obey them; such for instance, as "*Not slothful in business*," "*do good to them that hate you*," "*given to hospitality*," "*distributing to the necessities of the saints*," etc. etc.; and the other class requiring a power altogether *outside* of ourselves, and *beyond* our reach or control to obey; such, for instance, as "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*," "*love God with all your heart*," "*have faith in God*," "*love your enemies*," etc. Even the "*great faith*" of "*faithful Abraham*" was of the *former* class. The *ability* to slay his son was *wholly within* himself, and could, by a desperate resolve, be put forth at will, at any time, without any "drawing" of the "Father," which would be so absolutely necessary for the performance of the *latter* class, but which *appears* to be as influenced by any power that man can exert as the clouds which over his head. Says one:—

"From the moral importance which the oracles of truth ascribe to man in his fallen

state, a certain class of divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two CLASSES, natural and spiritual; comprehending under the latter those which require spiritual or supernatural assistance to their performance, and under the former those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin, to read the Scriptures, to frequent the worship of God, and to attend with serious assiduity to the means of grace; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only on the regenerate. Hence their ministry consisted almost entirely of an exhibition of the peculiar mysteries of the gospel, with few or no addresses to the unconverted. They conceived themselves not warranted to urge them to repent and believe the gospel, those being spiritual duties, from whose obligation they were released by the inability contracted by the fall."—*Rev. Robert Hall, Jr.*

If it is argued that the difficulties named in this circular thus foreshadowed, present only another phase of the old but vain endeavor to reconcile God's sovereignty with man's responsibility, about which so much has been written already, and therefore unworthy of notice, we make answer, that our solemn declaration that the difficulties are *bona fide* ones ought to be received, we submit, without question, and the information sought after cheerfully given. If the difficulties are such as really *cannot* be *answered*, it will be a *good answer* to have that fact made known, and the reason given why such is the case. By nature we are all on the broad road that leadeth to destruction; now we desire to escape for our lives from it, to the "strait and narrow way," and ask the way thither. When we are safely *in* the "narrow way," we shall require aids every step of the way, till our thumb is on the latch of heaven's gate. But this is *not* what we are *now asking for*. When once "in the way," we know of plenty of suitable works within our reach ready for our use. The information we require is, in relation to that short (or long?) *middle road which connects the two roads together*. There *must* be such a road, though mysterious it may be, and we are seeking to find it. Will you aid us?

It will be universally admitted that no one will *willingly* suffer either bodily pain or mental anguish a moment longer than it can be avoided. Now, suppose a party writhing in bodily pain of a disease which he well knows must soon terminate fatally, without an effectual remedy is at once used. How very eagerly would such a party take the medicine prescribed for his restoration to health. But suppose his malady absolutely incurable, and his agony of mind in consequence occasioned more *real suffering* than his bodily disease itself. Would he not just as readily do anything within his power to relieve himself of the greater pain? Most certainly. Says Spurgeon:—

"I had rather pass through SEVEN YEARS of the most wearisome pain, and the most languishing sickness, than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the terrors of sin. * * * It was my sad lot for three or four years to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God's mercy. I had to walk through this world with MORE THAN A WORLD ON MY SHOULDERS, and sustain a grief that as far *exceeds all other griefs as a mountain exceeds a mole-hill*, and I often consider to this day how it was that my hand was kept from rending my own body into pieces through the terrible agony which I felt when I discovered the greatness of my transgression."

We will further suppose that such a party sends for the minister whom he has so often heard persuade men to "accept salvation now," as in the follwing strain:—

"Lord, wherewith shall I woo them? wherewith shall I woo them? O that I could tell? I would go unto them in tears, I would weep out every argument, I would empty my veins for such, I would petition them on my knees if they would be PREVAILED with to repent and turn, * * * but I know that you will not be PERSUADED. * * * Sometimes I think the mercies of God will melt them and winning invitation will overcome them. * * * Take heed of delaying thy conversion, and set about a speedy and present turning. But God here in my text tells them how they may help it if they WILL, AND PERSUADES them to use the means; and if they will not be PERSUADED, he lets them know that it is their own fault. * * * If after all this the wicked will not turn, their own wilfulness is the cause of their damnation; they therefore die, because they will die. * * * We cannot make you believe against your will. * * * Your destruction is owing to yourselves, in that you resist. * * * If I could but get you to be willing."—*Alleine's Admonition.*

"As I must stand before my Judge at last, I feel that I shall not make full proof of my

ministry unless I ENTREAT you with many tears that ye would be saved. Are all our ENTREATIES lost upon you? Sinner, I have PLEADED with you as a man pleadeth with his friend. Were it for my own life I could not speak more earnestly. Come, I am not to be put off by your rebuffs, my brother. I ENTREAT you, I ENTREAT you, stop and consider, you rejecting, &c. My brother, I cannot bear that you should do this. The day is coming when you will need a Saviour."

"Oh my brother, I cannot let you put away religion thus; I should be worse than a fiend if I did not now, with all love, and kindness, and earnestness, BESEECH you to 'lay hold on eternal *life*.'"—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

* * * "Heaven is made as sure to the converted as hell is to the unconverted. I BESEECH you take this to heart. * * * I do now ENTREAT you. We study day and night what to say to you that may convince and PERSUADE you, and yet it is undone. * * We know if they would turn they might be saved, but we cannot PERSUADE them. If we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot PERSUADE them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot PERSUADE them, and what more can we do?"—*Rev. Richard Baxter's Call to the Unconverted.*

"The sole design of this volume is to urge the young to yield themselves to God. * * * Oh that I could with all the fervor of a dying man BESEECH you to attend to your only great concerns. * * * I BESEECH you, by the joys of the saints in heaven, and by the terrors of sinners in hell. * * * By all the blessedness of a happy eternity, be PERSUADED. * * * By the infinite worth of religion, I BESEECH you to make your choice. By all the glories of heaven, by all the solemnities of death, by all the eternal Father's kindness, I BESEECH you to give your heart to God. If you would not be the wilful murderer of your own soul, I BESEECH you embrace the gospel. If ever you would share the happiness of those who meet in glory, I BESEECH you by coming to Christ secure it now! * * * Oh be PERSUADED now to yield yourself to God."—*Persuasives to Early Piety.*

"It would be cruel, and only tormenting you before your time, to encourage an anxiety which could never be relieved by the possession of the object which excites it. Your case is not hopeless, you may be saved! You are invited to be saved. * * * The blessing is within your reach; it is near you, and it will be YOUR OWN FAULT if you do not possess it."—*Anxious Enquirer.*

"I have been all this while pleading with you to see if it were possible to *persuade* you to yield to the light and be converted. The threatenings of the Scripture were before me, and these moved me to use so many PERSUASIONS with you."—*Rev. Richard Baxter.*

"This little book unites in the ENTREATY, poor sinners, and with all earnestness, plainness and affection, implores you to come to Jesus, come to Jesus, come to Jesus. Jesus now stands with open arms. Come with all your sins and sorrows, come just as you are, come at once. He will in no wise cast you out. Come to Jesus, come to Jesus."—*Rev. Newman Hall.*

"What is your decision? Have you chosen or will you choose the way of life? * * * Choose then, I ENTREAT you, the way of life. Peace attends it and happiness is its end. * * You may be happy; and will you not? Oh listen to the PERSUASIONS that have been addressed to you! Yield to God and be happy. —*Rev. J. G. Pike, Derby, England.*

"Christ with his benefits is frequently tendered to men in the gospel; they have been BESOUGHT to accept him; these ENTREATIES and PERSUASIONS have been urged by the greatest arguments, the commands of God, the love of Christ, the inconceivable happiness or misery which unavoidably follows the accepting or rejecting of these offers, and yet nothing will affect them. * * * All arguments, all ENTREATIES are unsuccessful. * * * They will rather perish to eternity than accept him. The Author seems to have made use of every possible argument to win you."—*Address to Reader in Alleine's Solemn Warnings.*

"The doctrine naturally leads me to an *earnest* PERSUASIVE unto all sinners."—*Rev. John Flavel.*

"If God should send an angel from heaven to you to PERSUADE you to be converted, would you harken to him and obey him?"—*Rev. Richard Baxter.*

"May we keep this one aim in view, namely, to *persuade* you to be Christians. * * * O may God grant that many here may be at once *persuaded* to be Christians, for nothing but this will content me. * * * How will you excuse youself for resisting cogent, earnest, affectionate *persuasions*, all intended to lead you to be a Christian. * * * The Lord persuade you, I have done my best to do so."—*Spurgeon's Sermon.*

Now a minister attends the inquirer who is

sick and dying, and the following dialogue takes place:

Sick man.—Oh, Minister, I fear to appear before God with a heart unchanged, as mine evidently is. What shall I do?

Minister.—I can only point you to Christ. As Paul said to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Sick man.—Which way did you point? toward the north, south, east or west?

Minister.—I pointed neither to the right hand nor the left, but to "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Sick man.—You ask me to look at an object invisible. Do explain. I have been told the same repeatedly. I know that I should look to Christ, but *how* am I to do it? The two apostles on the road to Emmaus "*could not see him*," though he was in the flesh, and walking by their side, while their "*eyes were holden*," then how do you think I can "*behold him*" in spirit while my "*eyes are holden?*" When "*their eyes were opened they knew him.*" So will I when mine are in like manner; and this is what I am asking of you, how to obtain this heavenly vision?

Minister.—I mean that you should look with *an eye of faith.*

Sick man.—With "*an eye of faith*," "*with an eye of faith*," "*with an eye of faith.*" What *does* it mean? But where, oh where am I to get this "*eye of faith*" to look with? Do not torment me before my time by prescribing impossibilities. I had supposed from your *preaching*, that a *willingness to accept* Christ was *all* that was required; God knows that I am now willing, and yet I am unable to "*look and live.*"

Minister.—There certainly is an incomprehensible mystery about the workings of the Holy Spirit. Christ says: "*Ye can not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" Still, "the blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

Sick man.—Oh, minister, I am *so* disappointed. In the *pulpit* you have so often said that there was *nothing* between a sinner and salvation but his *unwillingness* "*to accept what was so freely offered.*"

"The reason why any of us are not saved is then obvious. It must be our own fault in not yielding to the solicitation of divine mercy. He tries the latch, pressing with merciful force against the barred door, to see if we are willing that he should come in, but our love of the world and of sin is like a bolt barring the door fast. * * * If we were but willing to give up sin, if we only ceased striving against him, he would at once enter and shed abroad his love through our hearts. You alone stand in the way of your own salvation. You will not open your heart to God."—*Rev. G. W. Bethune, D. D., New York.*

Well, then, I now find without a *mysterious something*, which you can no more explain than I can comprehend, *willingness* really amounts to nothing. Finding, however, that I am in error as to *willingness*, I will now dismiss that at once from my mind in order that I may be better qualified to receive what other instruction you may be pleased to impart. Nor can it be true that the blood of Christ cleanseth from ALL sin, because if it did, ALL must of necessity be saved.

Minister.—All who *believe* will be saved by it.

Sick man.—There it is again, "*believe*," "*believe*," "*believe.*" Why, my dear minister, I have heard that word so often, that it appears to me the most monotonous word in the English language. To be taught *how to believe* is the *very* purpose for which I have sent for you; and I entreat you, if this is the condition (and not *willingness* which I had been led by your preaching to believe) of salvation, teach me *how* I may comply with it. What is it savingly to believe? We are told that "the devils believe and tremble." Let us read what some good ministers have said.

"It is a difficult thing to explain WHAT IT IS TO BELIEVE. I suppose it is impossible. But when Jesus unveils his matchless beauty and gives you a sweet glimpse of his matchless face that was buffeted and spit upon, then the soul joyfully clings to him. This is believing, and joy and peace in believing. The truest, purest joy flows from a discovery of Jesus Christ. He is the hidden treasure, but pure joy to the finder."—*Rev. Richard M. McCheyne.*

"Reader, take warning this day. You must either BELIEVE on Christ, or perish everlastingly. Rest not till you can give a satisfactory answer to the question before you. Never be satisfied till you can say, By the grace of God I do believe."—*Rev. J. C. Hyle, Sr.*

"Oh, could I but believe,
Then all would easy be,
I would, but cannot, Lord believe,
My help must come from thee."

"I attended all the meetings, hoping to hear something which would tend to my spiritual good. I could not believe that the promises

of the gospel were intended for me.—*Rev. F. Wayland, D. D.*

Sick man.—Now can you tell me what it is to believe?

Minister.—It is just simply to believe *God's* word as readily and as implicitly as you do *man's* word.

Sick man.—That I think I now do already, so far as the *same class* of truths is concerned. On the evidence of man's word I believe that Alexander the Great once lived on this earth, and on the evidence of *God's* word I as firmly believe that Abraham once lived on this earth. Such parallel truths as these can be believed *without* any outside or spiritual aid; but the belief which saves the soul, *commences* just where the belief in our fellow-creatures must *necessarily terminate*, and we can proceed no further "on this line" of belief without an aid "*not revealed by flesh and blood.*" For instance, I could run a race with some amphibious animal so long as the contest was kept up on dry land, but the moment my competitor betook itself to the water I would be obliged to abandon the contest. So in like manner, I can with equal ease believe God's word and man's word until I reach that mysterious boundary of that "holy ground" where God proclaims to impotent man, "*Thus far shall thou come, but no further!*"

Minister.—You reason too much. Take Christ at his word, as the lame man did, who walked immediately on being commanded to do so. He did not stop to argue the matter, as to his ability to use his legs. Had he done so, he never would have walked, and it would, moreover, have been dishonoring to Christ to have hesitated.

Sick man.—True, true, he did not argue the point as I am now doing with you; nor would I be found so doing under the SAME circumstances. I do not consider the case at all analogous. It must ever be remembered that the command was given by him who once said, "*Let there be light, and there was light.*" The same voice, on another occasion, said to a *dead* man, "*Lazarus, come forth,*" and "*he came forth.*" Then again, some parties also were healed by Christ to whom he was unknown. It can not be be said of any of these, that they were healed on account of that faith in Christ which you are urging me to exercise. The simple truth is, *Almighty power went forth with the command*, which could no more be resisted than the stars to shine when they were commanded by the self-same authority to do so. No such power follows in the wake of Bible promises. Alas no.

Minister.—Are you going to ignore all Christ's most precious promises? When Christ said: "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" and "*Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,*" "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,*" "*Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved,*" "*It is worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,*" "*Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" what do you think is meant by these words? Are they words without any meaning? Was God mocking "all" to whom they were addressed?

Sick man.—Could I have answered that question satisfactorily to myself, I would not have put you to the trouble of coming here. I will answer your question frankly, as I have endeavored to do all the rest. I feel *thoroughly* conscious that *life eternal* is contained within them; that thousands on thousands have already found such life by virtue thereof; but in order to render them all efficacious, their *spiritual essence* must be "applied" by the Holy Spirit "*taking the things of Christ and revealing them unto us,*" "*enabling*" (a word often used in religious experience) the recipient to "*lay hold*" of the same.

Says one: "While standing at the end of my father's house, and meditating on that precious passage which has brought peace to countless weary ones, "God so loved," &c., *I was* ENABLED to take God at his word. My burden fell off from my back and I was saved."—*Rev. Duncan Matheson, the Scottish Evangelist.*

"How joyful was that day which first conveyed the sound of the gospel to our ears! But more happy for us the hour in which we were ENABLED to believe in Christ for the salvation of our souls."—*Rev. Thomas Scott, the Commentator.*

"I was *enabled* to realize, for the first time in my life, what Christ suffered, and for what a wretch he suffered."—*Rev. E. Payson, D. D.*

Aug. 15.—"Was ENABLED to plead with fervency.

April 10.—"God ENABLED me to agonize in prayer."

April 21.—"God again ENABLED me to wrestle for souls."

April 28.—"Was ENABLED more than ordinarily to agonize for immortal souls."

May 1.—"I was ENABLED to cry to God with fervency for ministerial qualification."

March 10.—I was ENABLED to leave myself and all my concerns with God," &c. &c. &c. —*Extracts from the Diary of D. Braunerd.*

A celebrated sculptor once remarked, on viewing a fine flawless block of stone, that "there was an angel in it." It would, however, require a hand divine to chisel away the surplus stone by which his ideal angel was surrounded, consequently the angel statue has not been made, but remains still a myth.

Minister.—And ever will. But you find the world full of Christians who are not myths, and those who are not Christians may become such if they *will* only stoop down to God's terms as offered in the Bible.

Sick man.—If you will only inform me *how* I am to "stoop down to God's terms," I shall, indeed, be thankful. Combe, in his *Constitution of Man*, contends that all pain is the sole result of the violation of some organic law of our nature. Suppose this to be true, the knowledge of it is of no practical use to us, inasmuch as it is out of our power to refrain from the violating of such laws. So I admit that the promises you have named *contain eternal life*, but avail me nothing, while unable to comply with the condition on which only they can be "received," namely, belief, and with respect to them I would beg to ask two questions: First, Have I power *within* myself to extract this life from them? and if I have, How am I to call it forth? Secondly, If the power is wholly in the hands of God, *how* am I to ask for it agreeable to the will of the divine donor in order to obtain it? There is no one I more envy than he who possesses this blessing.

Minister.—You argue, and reason, and appear sincere, yet you fail to comprehend that to have "*joy in believing*" you have only to "*believe God's testimony.*" Now suppose, for instance, you were informed that by the death of some very distant relative you had been left a legacy of $50,000. Would you not immediately believe it without *any effort* to do so? And would not the belief thereof fill you with joy? You would not stop to reason the matter, as you do these religious matters.

Sick man.—I freely admit that the result would be as you state under *such circumstances*, but I can *not admit* that the cases are *at all analogous.* That would be the announcement of a simple fact, which could not by any possibility be affected in any way, either by my belief or non-belief. Every dollar would come in due course, even if I had studiously ridiculed the report up to the moment I grasped the money in my hand. Now, suppose the legacy was *conditional* on my hating a lovable person, and loving a hateful one. I might endeavor, for the sake of the legacy, to lash or coax my will into compliance, but it would most certainly be a failure. What may be called the first epoch in our race's history was a *conditional* one, when Adam was placed in the garden of Eden. He was then happy, but his continued happiness was *conditional* on his abstaining from eating the fruit of a certain tree; failing in this, he fell, and with him his race. Thus was the second—an *unconditional* —epoch ushered in. Hereafter, it would not be those who did this, or failed to do that, would *then* become sinners, but *all were absolutely sinners.* This truth, with all its vast awfulness, is readily comprehended and believed, being unburdened with conditions. The third epoch was a *conditional* one. It was when Christ came into the world. To save "all?" no, but conditionally only those of the fallen race who "*believed.*" Had it been announced on the authority of God's word that all *unconditionally* would be saved on account of Christ's death, "*all*" would have *believed* it as readily as "all" "*believed*" that by Adam's transgression they fell. The advantages of Christ's death are enjoyed conditionally, only on belief, and I am pleading with you to instruct me how thus to comply. I do not object to the conditions *as such*, if I can only be "enabled" to comply with them. For instance, at the great Chicago fire, a carter asks $100 to carry two children to a place of safety. The father, under the circumstances, does not object to the charge, but HAS NOT GOT that amount of property left from the fire to pay it.

Then again, to believe such a statement does not require the "*mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit*" of which shortly ago you told me, "*Ye cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.*" Christ says that none can "*come*" unless the "*Father draw him.*" No such "drawing" is at all necessary to "receive" such a statement, consequently the analogy is *nil.* The parallel does not hold good in another respect. The moment such an announcement of a legacy is made, the whole matter can be as readily comprehended as at any subsequent time. Not so, however, Bible truths. Nearly all those who are converted have read the most precious promises scores of times "*as idle tales*," until their "*eyes were*

opened," after which they have stood with the utmost astonishment to think that they had so long failed to see the "infinite love and wisdom manifest in the simple way of salvation by belief in the Lord Jesus Christ." No such *additional* and spiritual light is requisite to comprehend and believe the testimony of man. Yet, again: Suppose to secure this legacy it was necessary for me to advance $2,000, my joy would be much marred, and I might not risk a $1,000 certainty for a $50,000 uncertainty; but I so thoroughly believe God's word, that I would give or do anything in my power to secure the blessings therein promised. This certainly proves that I have far *more* faith in God's word than man's. Would I, think you, "*ask*" and "*seek*" for any blesssing promised by man, as often and so long as I have been "*seeking*" and "*asking*" for those promised by God?

Sick man.—We are now at a most important point of my difficulties. Bear with me, while I endeavor to make it still more clear to you. God says, "*While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, day and night shall not cease;*" and further still, we are informed that "*He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust.*" Here are distinct positive promises made to the whole human family, *unconditionally*, on their being "*good*" or "*evil*," "*just*" or "*unjust*," by Him who has said CONDITIONALLY, "WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH *shall be saved.*" There being *no* conditions coupled with the former blessings, *all* rejoice in them, and expect nothing else than to participate in them all the days of their lives. Were the promise of ETERNAL LIFE through Christ made in the SAME LANGUAGE as the promise of "*seed time and harvest*," and "*rain*," &c., it would be just as natural for the one to be "*believed*" as the other, and rejoiced in more, because the blessings promised is infinitely more precious. Not, however, stopping one moment to question the wisdom of the difference, or to ask of God a reason for it, I most readily desire to conform with the conditions named, and wish to comply in every particular with them. Here centres my whole difficulty. How can I comply? How can I reach forward to that belief, that is *far, far beyond the mere natural and theoretical?* How can I place myself within the covenant of those to whom spiritual blessings are promised? How am I to obtain bible, spiritual blessings on the terms offered in the bible? Here is my whole trouble. How is it that I fail to enlist more of your sympathy?

Minister.—The only proper answer to give to your main question is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but you appear to have made up your mind *not* to be satisfied with such a suitable answer.

Sick man.—I know it *ought* to be a solution of my difficulty, but before Him who "requireth truth in the inward parts" I am obliged to say that it does *not* appear to reach my difficulty. Were I in prison for a debt of $5000, and had nothing whatever to pay, and you were to tell me I could be released on *payment of the debt*, but failed to inform me *how to obtain the amount*, it would not release or aid me. You tell me the conditions (which I know), but do not tell me *how these conditions are to be realized.* I am not "satisfied," as you are pleased to term it, with your "suitable answer," because—as I have repeatedly said—I already know it, but how to COMPLY with these well known conditions is the difficulty.

Minister.—You are evidently stumbling at the SIMPLICITY of the way, like many others have done. As one has said,

"I suppose it is almost impossible to explain what it is to come to Christ, it IS SO SIMPLE. It is just believing what God says about His Son. IF THE LORD persuade you of the glory and power of Immanuel, you cannot but choose Him. It is like opening the shutters of a dark room; that moment the sun shines in. So the eye that is opened to the testimony of God receives Christ that moment."—*Rev. R. M. McCheyne.*

Sick Man.—It may be just as IMPOSSIBLE to stop at a given *fine line which I cannot discern* as to jump over a twenty foot high wall. If I cannot "spiritually discern," I cannot. If you say none can thus spiritually discern "*but such as are taught of the Spirit*," and that the Spirit's aid is promised to those who ask, I make answer, that I can truthfully say that I have repeatedly asked therefor, and still my honest cry is, "*Oh that I could believe*," "Oh that I knew where I could find him."

Minister.—The Rev. John A. James, in his "*Anxious Inquirer*," illustrates, I think, this truth very nicely, by supposing a king to have issued a proclamation, offering a full pardon to certain of his subjects who were in rebellion against him, on condition of their laying down their arms and confessing their offence. "What" he then asks "in this case, is the state of mind and act required of those who would be saved? Faith. They must believe the

proclamation." Does not that illustration strike you as very applicable?

Sick man.—It really does not, and I feel profoundly astonished that you should think it does after what I have already said. Without exaggeration I can say that I have read and heard of hundreds of illustrations whereby attempts have been made to present "parallels" to scriptural faith, but to me they all appear like the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out, or an apple pie without the apples. The illustration from the "*Anxious Inquirer*" which you just now mentioned is as good as any of them. If such rebels were questioned as to their reasons (or the rebels of the Southern States of America) for not availing themselves of the offered pardon, they would tell you simply "*that they did not choose to accept.*" Now suppose these very rebels, while fleeing from their country, found themselves in a sinking ship in mid-ocean, without any hope of succor, and a minister on board reads from the bible heaven's proclamation, "*Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved,*" would they, think you, assign the same reasons for not believing it? Would not their agony of soul, as manifested by their heart-rending cries and anxious looks, convince to the contrary? Would they not most unhesitatingly accept the offer on any terms in their power?

Minister.—We are not saved *because* we believe, or for our faith. Belief or faith is put in opposition to *work*. We have really *nothing whatever to do*. "Christ has done it all, long, long ago." Suppose a man were in a boat just above a fall, and notwithstanding all his efforts with the oars, he was being drawn nearer and nearer the awful gulf. Just at this critical moment a rope is thrown to him from the shore; his safety, you will readily see, depends wholly on his throwing down his oars, grasping the rope, and pulling himself to land. In like manner you must throw away the oars of your own doing, and cling to Christ.

Sick man.—I have met with the same illustration time and again before, but honestly declare to you that I fail to see wherein it illustrates the "nothing to do" doctrine. The man was evidently saved by his "*doing.*" First, he threw down his oars (a verb to do). Secondly, he "*grasped*" the rope (a verb to do); and thirdly, he "*pulled himself to land*" (a verb to do). Had he failed *to do* any one of these three things, he would have perished. Paul did not tell the jailer that he had nothing to do. He who commands us to "*seek,*" "*ask,*" "*knock,*" and "*strive,*" did not tell the "young man" who came to him that he had *nothing to do*. As dark as I am, I know that there is nothing to do *by way of merit or compensation;* but I look on that as very different from the dogmatical, unqualified statement, that sinners have got "*nothing whatever*" to do. Still, if you prefer the phrase, we will not waste time over it to the detriment of the main question.

Minister.—I fear that you are looking for *feeling*. You must not look *inward to self*, but *outward to Christ*. We have nothing to do with feeling.

Sick man.—Was there no "*feeling*" when Saul, "trembling and astonished," said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" or when he said, "*I know whom I have believed?*" or Job, when he said, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth?*" Was David destitute of feeling when he said, "*The terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and terror hath overwhelmed me?*" I well recollect hearing a minister, during a revival of religion in his own church, warmly berate his unconverted hearers about "*this feeling,*" as he rather contemptuously called it, but at the close of his address took each inquirer by the hand, and asked, "*How do you* FEEL?" Is there no feeling in being "*sick,*" "*lost,*" "*heavy laden,*" etc.? Were I now devoid of *feeling*, would I have sent for you any more than a well person would have sent for the doctor? Did Christian have no *feeling* while the burden was on his back? and had he no *feeling* when it fell off? Is the transition from "*death*" to "*life*" so trifling that it excites no feeling? Did Peter have no feeling when he felt himself sinking?

Minister.—You certainly must be looking for something not promised in the Bible. Perhaps you are like the Jews of old who would not be satisfied without they saw "some sign from heaven?" Be assured Christ will no more gratify your whim than he did theirs, and it is absurd and decidedly wrong for you to expect it.

Sick man.—The Jews to which you allude asked Christ to be shewn with their natural eyes *nothing more* than thousands of their fellow-countrymen had very recently seen with theirs, and I see nothing "*absurd*" in their making the request they did, though for good reasons, assuredly, Christ did see fit not to gratify their natural curiosity. Unasked, Christ told the woman of Samaria at the well,

that He was "*the Christ*," though He had repeatedly refused to admit this when the question had been directly asked Him. I frankly confess that I do want to "*see something*," but with that "*spiritual discernment*"—which Jesus told the Jews who *had* "*seen wonders*" with their natural eyes—that "*spiritual things*" are seen. If it is such an absurdity for me to expect to "*see something*," why did you a little while ago tell me to "*Behold the Lamb of God?*" "There is hope in a LOOK at the Crucified One," says the poet who has always been considered evangelical. Another one says:—

"I SAW One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood."

And again:—

"First gave me SIGHT to view Him,—
For sin my eyes had sealed,—
Then bade me LOOK unto Him:
I LOOKED, and I was healed.

"A dying, risen Jesus,
SEEN by the eye of faith,
At once from danger frees us,
And saves the soul from death.

"Come, then, to this Physician,
His help He'll freely give;
He makes no hard condition;
'Tis only LOOK and live."

And again:—

"There is LIFE for a LOOK at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then LOOK, sinner—LOOK unto Him and be saved,
And know thyself spotless as He."

I could readily find you hundreds of such extracts, both in prose and verse, and yet you, an experienced Christian, ask me in amazement, "Do you expect to see something?"

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Ps. cxix. 18.

"You cannot believe in Christ except as you SEE Him, and if you LOOK at Him, you will learn. * * * There is nothing that so speedily kills all doubts as a LOOK into the loving eye of the bleeding, dying Lord."

"It is only "LOOK.' O mark how simple the way of salvation is. It is 'LOOK!' 'LOOK!' 'LOOK!' Four letters, and two of them the same."

"Sinner! thou art bidden LOOK! It is nought but 'LOOK.' It is simply 'LOOK.' If thou canst but LOOK to Jesus thou art safe."

"Do you SEE the man in the garden? Do you SEE that man of the cross."

"Believing is letting the hands lie still and turning the eyes to Christ. We cannot be saved by our hands; but we are saved through our EYES when they LOOK to Jesus."—*Extracts from Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons.*

"Oh, if you could but SEE Him! Come here; turn not away; come here and LOOK on Jesus. Would to God I had power to unveil Him to you. You should SEE those eyes that were once dim with tears! you should SEE that brow which was once red with blood! you should SEE those hands that were once clasped in prayer, once nailed to the cross."—*Rev. P. G. Guinness.*

Minister.—The "father of lies" sometimes succeeds in making inquirers believe that there is something *very peculiar* about their particular case; that none of the Bible promises are adapted to them. Are you being deceived thus, think you?

Sick man.—I cannot admit that my case is so *very peculiar*. I have conversed with, and read of a goodly number, who, for a longer or shorter period, have had the same difficulties to contend with during their journey from the City of Destruction to the cross and sepulchre. Allow me to read a short extract from the *Life of Brainerd:* "I was wont to murmur at God's dealings with me; and thought, when others felt their hearts softened, God shewed them mercy; but my distress remained still. I could not find out *what* faith was; or *what* it was to *believe* and *come* to Christ. I read the calls of Christ to the *weary* and *heavy laden;* but could find *no* way in which he directed them to come. I thought I would gladly come if I only knew *how*, though the path of duty were never so difficult. I read Stoddard's *Guide to Christ* (which, I trust, was, in the hand of God, the happy means of my conversion), and my heart rose against the author; for though he told me my very heart, all along under conviction, and seemed to be very beneficial to me in his directions, yet here he seemed to me to fail: he did not tell me anything I could do that would *bring me to Christ*, but left me, as it were, with a *great gulf* between me and Christ, without any directions how to get through."

Minister.—Tell me this: What do you think of your own case? What is it that you want or expect?

Sick man.—I will gladly tell you. I find that Saul, Col. Gardner, Rhodes, and many others, never "*asked*," "*sought*," or "*knocked*," yet "*found*" and "*received*." Allow me to illustrate this. I will read to you what the

sainted Rhodes says of his conversion, in his *Power in Weakness:* "On Wednesday poor Henry again conversed with me on religious topics, and invited me to go with him to meeting on the morrow evening. I was touched by his kindness, but felt utter distaste and *contempt* for his piety. I would not promise to go when we parted; I mused upon it, and *determined never to go.* In this temper I went to sleep. This proved to be a memorable night to me. The moment I opened my eyes in the morning, I felt myself a *new creature.* I felt a fresh set of sentiments and feelings rushing into my mind, that perfectly amazed me. No language I have at command will fully convey what I felt. * * * The scales having fell from my eyes, I began *to see.* * * * Oh what divine rest and beauty I soon felt and saw in the simple plan of salvation, through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ." His whole life hereafter was dedicated to the service of Christ.

Minister.—Like many others I have met with, you want God to convert you according to some standard of your own which you have set up.

Sick man.—I anticipated you would conjecture thus, but you are most certainly mistaken. I mention these cases to illustrate the *fact*, that while some are *weeks*, some *months*, and some *years* in "coming to a knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus;" others are blessed with the *mysterious something*, whereby they are "ENABLED" (a word so repeatedly used when describing the *crisis* in religious experience) to see "Him who is invisible," even without asking. Now, it appears to me, that all inquirers require to wait "for the troubling of the waters," until he who doeth all things by the counsel of his own will shall vouchsafe to give that *mysterious something* whereby we are "*enabled*" to cry, "Abba, Father."

Minister.—You just read an extract from the *Life of Brainerd*, now, let me read a short extract out of the same book, a few pages further on: "My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see such a God, such a glorious, divine Being; my soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness, and other perfections of God, that I was swallowed up in him. The *way of salvation opened up to me* with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and excellency, I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation." You see by this that Brainerd deplored his former blindness, and blamed himself for waiting so long.

Sick man.—True; but between the two periods of his life, as recorded in the two extracts read, Brainerd had received that *mysterious something* for which I long so much, whereby he was "ENABLED" to "*see*" "*light in God's light.*" I am in great hopes that some day (oh that God would graciously hasten the time!) I may be thus happy in the Lord; yet I do not *now see* that it will ever be possible for me to deplore not coming to the light *sooner*, inasmuch as I honestly think (I say it reverently before God) that I have "*sold all that I possessed*," "*bought the field*," and "*sought*" with all the "*strength*" for the time being I could exert, but as *yet* have "*found*" *not that mysterious something* for which we are commanded to "*seek.*" Spurgeon says:—

"I come into the pulpit, I seek to tell him sweet promises, and whisper to him sweet words of comfort; he listeneth not to me; he is like the deaf adder, he listens not to the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. Send him round to all the comforting divines, and all the holy Barnabases that ever preached, and they will do very little—they will not be able to squeeze a song out of him, do what they may. He is drinking the gall of wormwood; he says, "O Lord, thou hast made me drunk with weeping, I have eaten ashes like bread;" and comfort him as you may, it will be only a woful note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him; you will get no psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no sonnets. *But let God come to His child in the night, let Him whisper in his ear as he lies on his bed, and now you see his eyes flash fire in the night!*" Do you not hear him say,—

"'Tis paradise, if Thou art here;
If Thou depart, 'tis hell."

Suppose I were alone in a boat on the ocean, with my only food locked in an iron chest, with a complicated lock I did not understand, and which I only succeeded in opening at the end of the fifth day when I was nearly exhausted. When in after years I called to mind this circumstance, the thought of my suffering would cause me to shudder, but I never would or could upbraid myself with any *lack of diligence* in my endeavors to unlock the chest so soon as I possibly could.

Minister.—Pray be careful. Do not contend with God.

Sick man.—I desire not to be found so doing. As we have got the *Life of Brainerd* here, let us use it once more: "The many disappointments, the great distress and perplexity which I experienced, put me into a most horrid

frame of contesting with the Almighty, with inward vehemence and virulence, finding fault with His ways of dealing with mankind. My wicked heart wished for some other way of salvation than by Jesus Christ. I had strange projects full of atheism." *While these were his feelings*, would he not have been guilty of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira to have stated thus as he afterward did? "As I was walking in a thick grove, *unspeakable glory* seemed to open to the view an apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any *external* brightness, for I saw no such thing; nor do I intend any imagination of a body of light somewhere in the third heavens; but it was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of God, such as I never had before, nor anything which had the least resemblance of it. I stood still, wondered and admired! I knew that I had never seen before anything comparable to it for excellency and beauty; it was widely different from all the conceptions that I had of God, or things divine." *At the time* these statements were made, they were *truth*; but a *lie* if transposed as to time. The one statement was made *prior* to his receiving the *mysterious* something, and the others were *subsequent*. My dear sir, I beg that you will receive my statements as *candid and truthful*. Be candid with me. Cannot you aid me? I am as unreservedly spreading my case before you and the Lord, as Hezekiah did the letter of Sennacherib.

Minister.—You are a spiritual enigma to me. Do you really and truly believe the Bible to be the word of God?

Sick man.—Your questions often surprise me, but none more than this. I had supposed that the *whole tenor of my conversation* was an affirmitive answer to your question. I find that God, in His word, has promised a "pearl of great price" on certain terms. I acknowledge the worth of the blessing, and believe the promise, and complain not at the terms, but ask you *how* to comply with them. Does that look like unbelief in God's word? Still as you have asked the question I will endeavor to answer it as best I can. The Bible, which I firmly believe to be the true and only word of God, informs me that He, who shed His blood and died an ignominious death on the cross upwards of eighteen hundred years ago, was none other than the Son of God and also the Son of man, and being of such two-fold nature was thereby fully qualified to, and then and there actually did, make an infinite sacrifice for the exclusive benefit of, or on behalf of, the helpless sinner, and one which God the Father—against whom the sinner had most grievously transgressed—had accepted in full satisfaction or substitution for the punishment justly due to the sinner for such sins. But notwithstanding such atonement made expressly on the sinner's behalf, and the only possible way whereby he can be saved, yet the sinner is not, and cannot be in the least benefitted thereby—but his condemnation greatly increased—without a full belief that Christ so died for *him individually*. This knowledge of the truths of the bible I have learnt by just the same faculties by which I have learnt the contents of any other book that I have read. This "letter killeth," while "*the Spirit*" and the "*Spirit*" ONLY "*giveth life.*" Now it appears to me that the difference between such a mere *theoretical* knowledge of truth, and a "SPIRITUAL" and experimental one, to be just the difference there is between the belief of "*devils*" and the belief of "*believers*," and that is the difference between "DEATH" and "LIFE," or between "HELL" and "HEAVEN." This is my most miserable condition, but you can readily make it still more miserable by telling me that this wicked unbelief of mine is the greatest of all great sins, inasmuch as it makes God a liar, by wilfully refusing to believe His record of His Son, and that I am "condemned already," and deserve to be so, because I so persistently refuse to believe. Says J. A. James, in *Anxious Enquirer*:—

"Desponding sinner, doubt no longer. *The greatest sin you can commit, is to disbelieve* God's promise to forgive your other sins. Unbelief is the most heinous of all sins. 'He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.'"

And Spurgeon says:—

"I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the truth, for preaching the doctrine that is a sin in men, if they reject the people of Christ. I care not for even opprobrious titles. I am certain that I have the warrant of God's word in so preaching, and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood, unless he bears his frequent and solemn testimony upon this vital subject."

And another writes:—

"And are you not *deserving* a curse, who have transgressed God's laws a thousand times, and delay and refuse to yield Him your heart? While you will not love Him, will not serve Him, will not come to Christ, will not give up the world for Him who died for you upon the cross, do you not deserve to be accursed."

Minister.—Notwithstanding what you have said, I must bid you remember, that if you believe not what God has said of His Son, you do "*make him a liar.*"

Sick man.—I am most painfully conscious that it does appear as if I were endeavoring to "*make out a case against God.*" This makes me more reluctant to open my mind to *man* than to *God*, because He knows that it is as true that I am *without* "spiritual discernment." As Hagar did not see "*a well of water*" until "*God opened her eyes;*" and had the child died, she could have said truthfully, "*I saw not the water whereby to save the child's life.*" God is an "answerer of prayer;" still Paul truthfully states that he "sought the Lord thrice," and his prayer was not answered. Was Paul by this making God a liar?

Minister.—Well, what do you want to prove by all this?

Sick man.—First, that it is not wrong or sinful to make a *truthful* statement of my feelings, notwithstanding it *appears* to clash with God's word; and secondly, that I may be instructed by you how all these erroneous views may be thoroughly eradicated, and scriptural and proper views substituted therefor.

Minister.—How can I, when you *will not* love God or believe His word? As one has said:—

"If not saved, the blame will be on your own head. You will not believe! You will not come to Christ that He may give you life!"

Sick man.—Please, sir, do not say *will not*, for I yet again solemnly declare to you that I *cannot.* Allow me to quote Spurgeon again:

"I do not hesitate to affirm, that one of the HARDEST things for a sinner to understand is the way of salvation. It seems the plainest thing in the world. Nothing appears more easy than 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!' But when the sinner is led to feel himself a sinner, he finds it not so easy to understand as he thought."

You see what bodily pain I am in now; do you think I would hesitate a moment in taking any medicine that would relieve me from it?

Minister.—No, I cannot think you would.

Sick man.—Now I again declare to you, that my anguish of soul causes far more real suffering than my pain of body.

"I desire so to be saved *from sin*, that I would give all I am and all I have, to say I am a child of God. Sir, God is my witness, I speak now what I mean, and the tear is in my eye while I say it,—If I had the whole world I would cheerfully give it up, if I might but know I am a child of God. Yes, I would live on bread and water, and be willing to be shut in a loathsome cell till death seized my frame, if I could but call Him mine. I should have but one desire,—'Give me Christ, or else I die.' But if once I could say 'My sins are forgiven,'—if I could but once say, 'He has loved me and given Himself for me,"—I think the joy would be almost too great for my poor heart, and I should die with excess of bliss."—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

And yet you tantalize me by saying, I *will not* relieve myself of the greater pain! It is cruel of you.

Minister.—It is out of my power to help you out of your difficulties. I cannot *make* you believe.

Sick man.—I will not stop to take objection to the word "*make.*" How *very* different is your preaching in that *chair* from what it is in the *pulpit.* In the *pulpit*, "*it is so very simple, it is only look and live*," "*now*," etc.; but in the *chair*, it is "*too difficult*," "*like the wind*," "*incomprehensible.*" etc. In the *pulpit*, it is all *persuading* to *induce* your hearers to become "*willing;*" in the *chair*, *willingness* is really nothing.

Minister.—Perhaps after all you are not as willing as you imagine yourself to be.

Sick man.—Supposing it were possible for me to be deceived in this respect, I am *sure* that I desire to be made willing, even if against my will. How I am perplexed to be sure! Who will deliver me from this prison-house?

Minister.—Here is a promise just suited to your case, as you have just stated it. Isaiah lxi. 1: "He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Sick man.—I acknowledge that the "prison door" is wide open, and I would fain, with others, go out thereat into the "liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free," but I feel myself *chained to the floor of the prison.* I eagerly listen to the many kind invitations to "Come out from among them;" "Why will ye die?" etc.; and I feel confident that *I am included* in the general pressing invitation, as well as those who I see obeying it, that I for the moment forget my chains, and imagine that I have nothing to do but to walk out, when I am painfully reminded how fast I am chained to the floor! To extricate myself, I at times almost involuntarily struggle as a party who finds himself buried alive might be supposed to do, but all to no purpose. A Job's comforter occasionally tells me that it's

all my own fault, and that I am "making God a liar," etc., because I *will not* believe.

Minister.—Poor Bunyan, I think, was troubled in a similar manner to you.

Sick man.—If he was, he most signally failed by his *Pilgrim's Progress*, in giving any aid out of such difficulties. Perhaps he intended the work of that name, now in circulation, to be the *second* volume, the *first* volume of which he was never able to write. Christian is introduced as a recent inhabitant of the City of Destruction; but in appearance he certainly does not look very like one, for he has a *burden* (his chief characteristic) on his back, while the inhabitants of that city have *none*. A Frenchman, fleeing from Paris, would not cease to be a Frenchman before he got out of sight of the city. Had Christian's countrymen Christian's burden, would they not have taken Christian's method to have rid themselves of it? How came Christian with the burden at all? Bunyan does not commence at the root.

Suppose there were thousands lost *within* the labyrinth of the catecombs, would it not be thought very singular if those who had been fortunate enough to find their way *out*, should be furnished with ample printed instructions how to find their way *home*, while no effort was made to extricate those who were lost *within* the catecombs? This is just the position of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian, when first introduced to the reader, is safe *out* of the City of Destruction; in fact, a saved man, *inasmuch as none are lost in his condition this side the cross.* The *first* volume must *end*, of course, just where the *present* (the second volume) *commences;* and this is just the information I am seeking for now. Who can be found to undertake the task of writing this *first* volume of the *Pilgrim's Progress?* The volume published instructs how to *rear* a vine. The one yet to be published should instruct us how to obtain *the seed.*

Minister.—Do you mean to contend that God has made some mistake in his plan of salvation?

Sick man.—By my sight, feeling, or any other sense, I would not believe that the world was round, or that the sun stood still, but I believe both in *spite* of my sight or feeling. Thus I *force* myself to believe *all* God's word. To tell God that I saw myself just such a sinner as he represents me to be, and deserving of "eternal damnation," would be to tell him what he well knew would be a *lie.* I am, however, sure that his representation is *correct*, and mine *false*, and am asking you, not to bring God *down* to my views, or to alter his own plans, but that you would teach me how I may be made to see "light in God's light."

Minister.—If you pray in faith, God has promised to give wisdom.

Sick man.—You continue to tell me what I already know, and refuse to tell me what I do not, notwithstanding I plead so earnestly and repeatedly. I know full well, that "without faith, it is impossible to please God;" and I know further, that "faith is the gift of God." It is thus evident that it requires faith to obtain faith. Now, the question is, How is this first germ of faith obtained? In making the Niagara Suspension Bridge, the great difficulty was to get over the first wire; when that was accomplished, all the other wires could be drawn over by it. I once heard a minister say in the pulpit that it was a physical impossibility for our God to take a *second* step until the *first* was taken. Now this *first* step is what I am labouring for.

Rye and wheat when growing together in the early spring cannot possibly be distinguished, the one from the other, but when the season has somewhat advanced, the rye outstrips the wheat in height three fold, and can easily be distinguished; but it is as much rye at one time as the other. The reverse of this is the case with mankind. Believers are not like unbelievers only up to a certain age, until they become of an age to develope their characters; but *all*, positively *all*, are equally sinners in the sight of God, and stand in the same position. The sinners who become christians do not become so at some particular age, but at all ages. God no doubt could, if he saw fit, convert the whole by his almighty fiat, treating all as a mass of inert matter, but he has not seen fit to work this, but instead thereof, he has given us "*His word*," in which "*all*" are invited to "*share*," and to "*accept*" "*now*." Now there must of necessity be the FIRST STEPS in order to avail one-self of the "*means*." I once heard you say in the pulpit that the FIRST step was *out of self*, and the SECOND *into Christ.* Do take me by the hand and aid me to take this *first step.*

Minister.—As often as I am thus cornered up, I will make the same answer. BELIEVE.

Sick man.—But can I believe without the aid of the Holy Spirit?

Minister.—This aid is most distinctly promised to those who ask.

Sick man.—Then am I to understand that *in fact* the FIRST STEP is to ask for this aid? I understood you differently just now. I have often asked it.

Minister.—You evidently ask "*amiss.*"

Sick man.—I know that I endeavour to ask aright. Am I to understand now that really the VERY FIRST step is to be taught to ask aright, for the Spirit's aid, to savingly believe.

Minister.—If you are *properly in earnest* you cannot but ask aright.

Sick man.—Is it then the VERY FIRST STEP to be made "PROPERLY IN EARNEST?" If I am not, as you appear to think, sufficiently in earnest for the blessings asked, I am *intensely* in earnest to be made adequately in earnest to ask aright for the Holy Spirit's aid in order to savingly believe.

Minister.—I cannot, I see, do you any good, so I will bid you good bye.

Sick man.—When you were ordained to the ministry, you made a solemn declaration that you were "*called of God*," and "*so*" to you if you "*preached not the gospel.*" This "*good news*" which you were thus commissioned from on high to proclaim, required, of course, attentive hearers in order that the contemplated results might flow from it, hearers who were willing to "*accept*" of the proffered salvation, on the terms offered. I profess to be intensely just such a hearer, and therefore ought not to be thus left by you, until you felt assured that I "*who was once blind*" did "*now see*;" or else you should frankly acknowledge that the means at your disposal or the influence under your control were inadequate for the emergency. I know of no minister more able and willing than yourself "to preach the gospel" to me, yet the result does not follow. Do not, I pray, keep me in this painful suspense any longer. Am I to give up in despair? If you have not done all that it is in your power to do, you are acting very unkindly towards me. If you accuse me of "*not giving heed*" to the best of my ability, you do me a cruel injustice, and if you say that the reason lies not with God, yourself, or myself, you tantalise me almost beyond endurance. From my inmost soul I repeat my question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Minister.—I have said and done all I can, and really see nothing for it but that you patiently wait till God shall see fit to "*reveal Himself*" to you by "shining on you with the light of His reconciled countenance," which I trust He will soon do.

Sick man.—That is just my own view of the case. What else can I think! The words "*strive*" and "*diligently seek*" seem to imply as much. But this is so *diametrically opposite to your vehement* pulpit demands for "*every one*" "NOW" to believe. "*He that is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*," say you, "*is waiting to be gracious.*" "*To morrow*" "*may be too late*," "*Enter while there is room*," "*All things are now ready.*" Tell me, can you say all this in the pulpit without any mental reservation, and then come into this room and tell me, a dying man, that I must bide God's time? Not only so, but you have often told me that "*unbelief*," in which you appear quite content to leave me for an indefinite period, is the very *essence* of sin, in magnitude swallowing up all other sins.

Minister.—In saying what I do in the pulpit I do not go one step beyond my divine commission, any more than the prophet Ezekiel did his, when he prophesied to "*the dry bones.*" Were the prophet Ezekiel here, would you dare take him to task for prophesying as he did? He from whom I hold my commission "*cannot lie*," and He has told me to "*preach*" that "*whosoever believeth shall be saved*," and I do so, and I *know* it is true, and would suffer martyrdom sooner than deny it.

Sick man.—Oh, how wearied I am in stating and re-stating that I believe as firmly as you possibly can, that all "*believers*" will assuredly be saved. Why do you so repeatedly contend for a truth admitted? *How am I to become such a "believer?" is the question of questions with me*, in fact the ONLY question. Pardon me for saying that I fail to see in this very trite "dry bone" illustration either any comfort or applicability. I cannot think that it was "the mind" of the "Holy Spirit" that from this vision should be learnt the doctrine you have stated, any more than the "*two sticks*" which "*became one*" in the prophet Ezekiel's hands teaches the doctrine that the sinner and Christ become "*one*" immediately on being brought together by the minister.

If the "*dry bones*" are *intended* to represent the unconverted, and Ezekiel the preacher of the gospel to them, as you state, then the same results should follow the *preaching* as the *prophesying.* If this interpretation is the true one, I contend that the failure must be laid at your door, inasmuch as the "dry bones" were *absolutely inanimate*, but those to whom you are commanded to "preach" and "teach," *animate.* These "dry bones" were not commanded to "*believe*" preparatory to their arrayment into the "*exceeding great army.*" At the prophet's bidding EVERY "*bone came together, bone to bone.*" Had the same results followed the *prophesying* and your *preaching*, a "*few*" only of the bones would have come together, forming a queer army! This is the second time

you have introduced this "*nothing whatever to do*" doctrine. I make answer again that I am anxious to accept salvation on ANY TERMS or no terms. I am told that I have nothing whatever to do. Hear what Spurgeon says in one of his sermons: "To believe is as a man would do in a stream. *It is said that if we were to fold our arms, and lie motionless, we could not sink.*" I sometimes begin to think that I have found out the whole secret—I must "fold my arms" AND LIE STILL, but I no sooner compose myself thus than I am SUDDENLY STARTLED with the alarming cries, "AWAKE! AWAKE!! *thou sleeper*," "STRIVE," "*Flee to the City of Refuge!*" "*Take it by force!*" &c. &c. How bewildered I am! Once or twice I had hoped that I had got you to understand my position, and you were about to instruct me how to take the first step out of the "*broad way*" towards the "*narrow way*," but have been doomed to disappointment!

Minister.—More than once your statements seem to imply that you attribute your state of mind to God withholding the influence of His Spirit. Now tell me candidly, could you meet God face to face and tell Him so?

Sick man.—Your question is a *very searching* one, and had it been casually asked me in ordinary conversation, I might have unthinkingly answered it at once in the affirmative. I am, however, free to confess that underlying all my honest strugglings after truth and life, there is a still small voice that will not be wholly silent, that lays the responsibility at my own door. Still it does not annihilate *the fact* that I am needing just the information for which I ask. I *cannot* understand!

Minister.—You must not forget that God is a Sovereign, and as such has a right to "do what He will with His own."

"My heart rose against it and accused God of exercising partiality with His creatures, not considering that He has a right to do what He will with His own. * * * I now saw that it would have been just in God had He left me to my own chosen way."—*Rev. Jeremiah Hallock.*

"And when at times, great distress began to rise on a sight of my vileness and inability to deliver myself from a Sovereign God. * * * I had strange projects, full of atheism, contriving to disappoint God's designs and decrees concerning me, or to escape His notice and hide myself from Him. * * * Sometime before, I had taken much pains, as I thought, to submit to the sovereignty of God; yet I mistook the thing."—*Rev. David Brainerd.*

"You should remember, sinner, that your Maker sustains the character of a Sovereign and of a righteous Judge. Though everlasting damnation be ever so dreadful, yet it is what you have deserved, and what your injured Sovereign may inflict upon you, and be righteous, and holy, and glorious in it."—*Rev. Abraham Booth.*

Sick man.—True, true. By virtue of this sovereignty, all Bible-readers admit God has a "right," as you name, even to "cast both soul and body into hell." But he has most graciously waived this "right" on behalf of "all" those who "*believe*" and will "*come to Him.*" I desire to derive the benefit flowing from this covenant by the acceptance of the terms. This is positively *all* I want. I am no antinomian.

Minister.—I fear that you are stumbling at God's decrees, as I have known many to do. In *spiritual* matters, as in *temporal*, your duty is simply to "use the means." When sick, you send for the doctor.

Sick man.—How can "*dry bones*," to which you just now compared me, use "*the means?*" In the temporal matter of my health I "*used the means*," by sending for the doctor, but it has most signally failed. Do you mean to say that it is equally problematical in spiritual matters when "means are used?" In my spiritual ailment I considered the best "*means*" for me to use was to send for you, but it has failed also.

Minister.—In relation to spiritual blessing God says, "*shall*" and "*will.*" None who have diligently used the right means have found them to fail.

Sick man.—Am I now using the "right means," and if so, may it be hours, days, weeks or months before the blessing is received?

Minister.—You think then, I suppose, that God is dealing hardly with you?

Sick man.—I would *very much* rather you had not asked the question, but as you have done so, I must answer truthfully. It has that appearance to me.

Minister.—I can safely leave you in the hands of the Lord. He will do what is right by and for you.

Sick man.—Of course he will; but that is poor consolation for me. I have no doubt but what the population of the bottomless pit will be *obliged to acknowledge* that the Lord has done right in sending them there. Do you mean to doubt my sincerity? If I am not in earnest about my salvation, then it is impossible for me to be in earnest about anything.

Minister.—While I sympathize with you deeply, I am compelled to say, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." God says, that "Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now, I believe it, notwithstanding all you or any other mortal may say to the contrary.

Sick man.—Do not, I pray, get angry with me. I desire reverently to say the same thing. I do not understand how I can possibly be a "liar" for saying what I feel in my very conscience *is truth*, though I do *not understand* it. We are now alone—permit me to engage in a short prayer for this blessing: "O Lord, we have just been reading in thy own Word, that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved; give me, I beseech thee, every qualification of body, soul, and mind, which thou seest is requisite and necessary, in order that I may be enabled to 'call' in a way agreeable to thy will, in order that I may derive all the spiritual sweetness and strength and profit that thou didst design to flow from it, when, in infinite wisdom, thou didst most graciously put it in the Word which thou designed to be a 'lamp to our feet, and a guide to our way.'" I feel that I have now "called on the Lord" with all the praying powers with which I am endowed. Am I now *saved?*

Minister.—Well, but the Bible says further, that "none can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." If your's was *such* a "call" you *are* saved, and if it was *not*, you are *not.*

Sick man.—Do you mean to deny that I used my *best endeavor* to "call" in the way you name?

Minister.—No, I cannot deny that.

Sick man.—You are now placed in the same dilemma as I was shortly ago. While you, with me, admit that God's word *must* be true, you also admit that I am not a "*liar*," as you rather angrily called me a moment ago. We will, however, not waste precious time on mere argument or words. I desire God's promised blessings on God's own terms, and yet again entreat of you, as one of the ministers whom he has "called," to instruct me. How am I to reach up to, or come down to, the "only hope set before us in the gospel?"

Minister.—As I before said and repeat, the Holy Spirit, without which none can "come" to Christ, is most distinctly promised to those who ask. As Spurgeon says: "Take God at His word, and ask Him 'to do as He has said.'"

Sick man.—Excuse me, if I again engage in prayer: "O Lord, here is another promise in thy own Word, which has been pointed out to me as the one best adapted to my case. I pray that the same may be granted me, according to thy Word, that necessary aid may be vouchsafed to me, in order that I may have 'a spiritual discernment' of spiritual things, and thus become 'taught of God.'" I feel now that I have honestly endeavored to extract the spiritual nutriment which I know is contained in this promise, but I feel, also, that the blessing has been withheld. What next am I to do or say? and how am I to do or say it?

Minister.—You make me tremble.

Sick man.—I do, too. But I would tremble still worse to state what would be untrue. I feel that there is a great disparity between my experience and God's word, and this is the very reason why I have sent for you. I know that I am *wrong*, and want you to instruct me *right.*

Minister.—Remember, "the heart is deceitful above all things." Examine minutely down deep into your own heart, and see if you are not claiming some degree of *merit* for all these honest, sincere endeavors of yours. I cannot sufficiently impress on your mind, that we are saved for *Christ's sake* alone.

Sick man.—I frankly admit what you say to be God's way of salvation. Bear with me while I yet again engage in prayer: "O Lord, thy servant has drawn my attention to another important portion of thy Word, indeed an *all-important* one, made very manifest throughout all thy Word, namely, that we are saved for thy dear Son's sake. My desire is, thou knowest, to be saved in thine own way, and I pray that whatever I may be clinging to, or resting upon—*either consciously or unconsciously*—other than thine own way, thou wilt sever and remove. Eradicate, I beseech thee, every unscriptural view that I may be now entertaining of myself as a sinner, and of thee, the sinner's only Saviour, and substitute therefor scriptural and proper views of the same, making me willing and able to accept thine own promises on thine own terms. All of which I desire to ask (so far as I understand the import and meaning) for Christ's sake." Can you suggest any other promise for which I should plead as a sinner, in order to become a Christian? or can you suggest any other way of pleading for them?

Minister.—You do greatly perplex me.

Sick man.—It is you who perplex me. You have always represented the way of salvation as so very simple, "that its simplicity was its difficulty"—*now*, it is nothing but a labyrinth of perplexing difficulties.

Minister.—It is simple enough to those "*taught of God.*"

Sick man.—That is what I already know; but what I do *not know* is, *how* to procure this divine teaching. I have often asked "*wisdom*" of Him who has promised to "*give liberally*," but I have not received the coveted blessing. It must be because I have "*asked amiss.*" Cannot you instruct me how to ask aright?

Minister.—Your question implies a doubt as to the sincerity of my Master's word, and I will not sit here and listen to it.

Sick man.—I feel that there is *great force* in what you say, still I cannot admit that you have so much cause for indignation, inasmuch as "*you, therefore, which believe*" and "*obtained like precious faith*," there are especially to you left "*exceeding great and precious promises*," yet you are continually deploring your utter inability to grasp these promises bequeathed to you. The Bible does not speak of *first, second, third and fourth* class Christians, with a distinct and separate set of promises to each particular class, but the same "*Father*," who is "*no respecter of persons*," has left but the one set of promises. If I am to be accused of questioning the sincerity of God's word, because I fail to obey God's command to "*believe*," are not you Christians much more guilty in not accepting the more exalted blessings especially promised to "*believers*" in the same book by the same God? I solemnly declare that I eagerly desire after the blessings promised and enjoyed by those who "believe." And surely my solemn declaration ought to be believed. The fourth class of Christians solemnly declare that they eagerly desire after the blessings promised and enjoyed by the first class Christians. Now, both admit that the promises are to their respective cases are to be found in God's word, and both also admit that they fail in ability to appropriate them to their own use. They appear to recede from them as they are approached. Now, neither of those classes desires to represent that God's word is untrue, nor do they relish to be called "liars" because they truthfully represent their exact position. It appears to me as if God had graciously provided a wide-spread grape-vine, the fruit of which was better the higher the clusters hang, and invited all equally to partake. These Christians who luxuriate on the middle clusters, censure all those *below* them for eating such inferior grapes, when there are so much better where they, for the time being, happen to be. They are not only urged, but at times censured for not complying. Then, again, those in the middle branches are chided by those still higher than themselves. And the very highest see the very best clusters hopelessly beyond their reach. I have noticed that every Christian appears to think it the easiest possible thing for others to come up to *their* standard, while they frankly acknowledge their utter inability to advance to the standard of others who may be higher than them. God says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it." How many thousands of pious parents have tried and failed to grasp blessing from this promise. Christ says, "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." How many a little prayer-meeting has "*agreed*" to "*ask*" that the preaching of the gospel might result in the conversion of sinners, &c., but failed to grasp the promised blessing.

Minister.—God says, "If thou canst *believe*, all things are possible to him that *believeth.*" What you want to prove by all this, I do not understand.

Sick man.—It is very important that I should be understood here. You keep telling me that in order to be saved I must "*believe.*" I make answer that I am UNABLE to do so, but you apparently do not believe me, inasmuch as you again and again repeat the same command, and tell me that to believe is a very simple thing, so simple indeed that its simplicity is its difficulty, and that I am making God a liar, &c. &c. I answer by asking you, if you Christians do not stand under the same condemnation in disobeying other parts of God's word, though you also plead inability? On the authority of God's word you command me to believe. On the same authority I command you to "*grow*" to "*full assurance.*" See what glorious, bright and rapturous spiritual delights Martyn, Rhodes and many others enjoyed, while good old Thogmarton never enjoyed a comfortable assurance in his life. Not only are there such Christians, but many, like Bunyan, Dr. Payson, D. Brainard, Cowper, Hallock, and many others, were at *times* luxuriating in the higher branches of the vine, and at other times were obliged to eat the poorer fruit on the lowest branches, experiencing the keenest anguish of mind, fearing that they had never savingly believed! They sing—

"How tedious and tasteless the hours,
When Jesus no longer I see!

Sweet prospects, sweet birds and sweet flowers
Have all lost their sweetness to me:
The midsummer sun shines but dim;
The fields strive in vain to look gay;
But when I am happy in Him,
December's as pleasant as May."

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?"

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill."

Still it is *equally true* that by far the larger proportion of those who DO "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*" DO NOT enjoy this assurance; not, however, because they *desire it not*, for they long for it, but because they *lack*, what we lack, that *mysterious* something to enable them to do so.

Minister.—You ask me if I enjoy full assurance. I answer that I do not.

Sick man.—Why? Do you not desire it?

Minister.—I certainly do.

Sick man.—Why then do you not? You surely do not stumble at the "*simplicity*" of the promises?

Minister.—I confess my inabi——, God, for some wise purpose, does not see fit to give to all the "same measure of faith."

Sick man.—Exactly so, exactly so. I do not "*believe*," not because I *will not*, but *cannot*. You do not enjoy the blessing of "*full assurance*," not because you *will not*, but because you *cannot*. I will not, however, call you "*a liar*" as you do me.

Minister.—I do not see that good is to be accomplished by a continuation of this conversation.

Sick man.—Nor do I. I thank you most kindly for your visit. Still I must be frank with you, and state that I am greatly disappointed at the result of the interview. While, however, I have not been profited by what you *have said*, there is much food for thought in what has *not been said*. When left alone I shall endeavor to meditate on it. I have heard it stated that what the Bible has *not* said was inspired equally with what it *has said*. Good bye.